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municipal recreation bulletin

Ministry of Community and Social Services

Youth and Recreation Branch

Evaluation

What is evaluation?

From time to time all those responsible for programs in the community must find honest and objective answers to the questions:

How well are we doing what we are doing?

Are we doing what we ought to be doing?

This is the process of evaluation. To make accurate measurements or valid judgments about programs, ideas, attitudes, projects and goals, we must have objective evidence. Useful evaluation must be developed systematically.

Why should municipal recreation programs be evaluated?

All the literature of recreation refers to objective evaluation methods as an integral part of recreation programming. However, under the pressure of day-to-day operations, evaluation is often neglected by recreationists.

Only by continuous evaluation can a recreation authority know that its programs are meeting the needs of the people of the community—achieving the goals for which the programs were planned. Through evaluation it is possible to identify, develop and improve the elements that are effective, eliminate or modify those that are missing the target.

Evaluation is always more than just finding out whether a desired result is or is not being achieved. It also aims at determining why a given course of action does or does not produce the desired result.

Principles of evaluation

Good evaluation meets people where they are. The standards used in evaluating any program should be such that the next improving step is within reach of the participants and the leaders. The achievements of a group of beginners involved in their first programs should not be measured by semi-professional standards.

The best evaluation is cooperative. The participants in the program can contribute as much, or more, to evaluation as the professional staff, the committee members, or the Youth and Recreation Consultant.

Useful evaluation considers every angle. The key to success or failure in a program may depend on one of the least obvious factors—some change or circumstance that has never before been taken into account.

Business-like evaluation is continuous and systematic. Different techniques may be used at different stages, but evaluation should be an on-going process at all stages.

Effective evaluation is frank and probing. Not only are activities and programs to be measured, even the ultimate goals to which the programs are directed need to be reviewed and tested from time to time. The needs on which the original objectives were based may have changed.

All evaluation leads to action. The purpose of evaluation is to improve programs and activities, and to make the goals of the programs clearer and more relevant to individual and social needs.

Steps in evaluation

1
What is the target? Only when we know our destination can we measure how far we have to go.

2
How far have we come? To measure achievement, objective evidence and reliable reports are needed.

3
What action will improve progress toward the goal? A program that is progressing slower than predicted, or one that is clearly off course, may

be the result of poor planning or operation, or a wrongly set goal.

4
How well are we doing? A systematic and continuous comparison of actual progress and realistic expectations will reveal shortcomings and suggest revisions at an early stage.

5
What does the collected evidence mean? A program not being patronized as expected is not necessarily badly-designed: inadequate publicity, overlapping programs, unsuitable weather, changed interest or need, or ill-founded expectations may be the causes. The problem should be approached from every angle, so that evidence from one source may be checked against evidence from another source. It is the reinforcing effect of evidence from many angles that increases the objectivity and soundness of the conclusion.

6
Are we doing what we should be doing? The goals set for a program must be acceptable to the participants. They must also be as clear to the participants as to the planners. The standard set by the goals must not be over the heads of the participants.

7
Can we reach the objective? On the basis of the best evidence it may become clear that the target will never be reached. The current goal may then be cut back and, if the original objective is still valid, planning can begin for alternate action that will carry the program the rest of the way.

Evaluation techniques

If the measurement of progress can be based on numbers attending, tickets sold or applications received, the problem is simply one of collecting figures. More often community groups want answers to more complex questions:

- Are participants satisfied with some program, policy or procedure?
- Is a new program needed?
- Why cooperation does or does not develop between certain groups.
- What do the people concerned really think about a community problem?
- How do people of the community rate an activity?
- Are participants ready for a proposed change in a program?
- Is the standard set in a program too high or too low?
- Do participants agree with leaders about the objective of a program?

Our most valuable source of evidence in evaluating municipal recreation programs and activities is in the freely expressed opinions of those who participate—the people whose needs the programs are designed to meet. There are many devices for getting to know the views and feelings of people—conferences, interviews, questionnaires, ballots.

Instruments have been designed especially to enable Ontario municipal recreation authorities to evaluate their total programs. Youth and Recreation Consultants of the Department of Education are prepared to assist municipal recreation committees and recreation staff in developing valid procedures for evaluation at every level.

Attached to this bulletin are 25 sample questions concerning the adequacy of local recreation programs. A group of such questions can be used to collect the judgments of any number of citizens.

1. Shade the rectangles in which, in view of our total resources, we have an adequate program:

Activity	Infants 0 – 5	Children 6 – 10	Youth 11 – 15	Young Adults 16 – 25	Adults 26 – 45	Mature Adults 46 – over
Art and Crafts						
Community Development						
Dancing						
Dramatics						
Library Programs						
Music						
Nature and Outing						
Social Events						
Sports and Games						
Intellectual						

2. Rank our activities in order from inadequate to adequate or better (1 – 10):

art and crafts ☐ community development ☐ dancing ☐
dramatics ☐ library programs ☐ music ☐
nature and outing ☐ social events ☐ sports and games ☐
intellectual ☐

3. What steps can we take to improve inadequate activities? _____

_____

4. Rank our recreation programs provided for special age groups in order from inadequate to adequate or better (1 – 6):

0 – 5 ☐ 6 – 10 ☐ 11 – 15 ☐ 16 – 25 ☐ 26 – 45 ☐ 46+ ☐

5. How can we make better provisions for the age groups least provided for? _____

_____

6. Rank provisions for groups in order of adequacy (1 – 3):

male ☐ female ☐ male/female ☐

7. What steps can we take to improve the least adequate programs for these groups? _____

_____

8. Rank program activities during the months of the year (1 – 12):

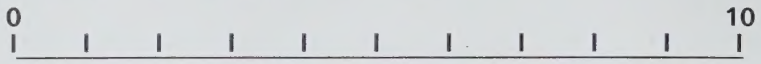
January ☐ February ☐ March ☐ April ☐
May ☐ June ☐ July ☐ August ☐
September ☐ October ☐ November ☐ December ☐

9. What steps can we take to increase program activities in the slackest months of the year?

_____

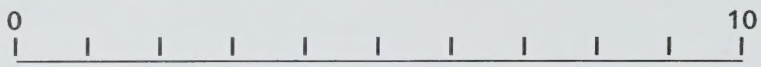
Answer each of the following questions using the rating scale, and also make your recommendations for improvements:

10. To what extent does our program provide equal opportunity for all?

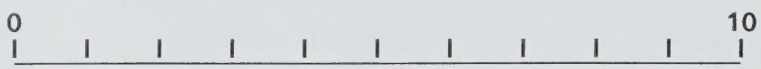


11. To what extent does it serve all ages?

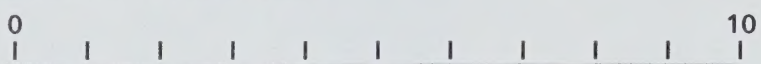
12. To what extent does it provide equally for both sexes?



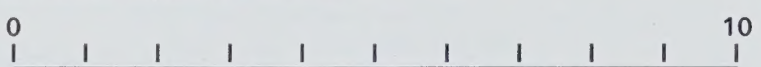
13. To what extent does it provide opportunities for co-recreation?



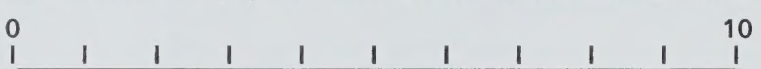
14. To what extent is it balanced on a 24-hour basis?



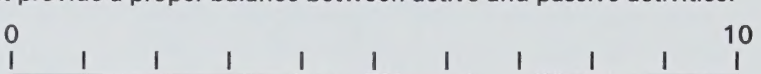
15. To what extent is it balanced on a year-round basis?



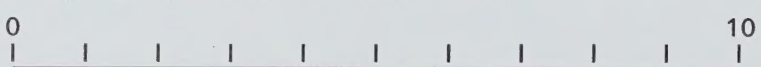
16. To what extent is it balanced in terms of physical, creative, intellectual and social components?



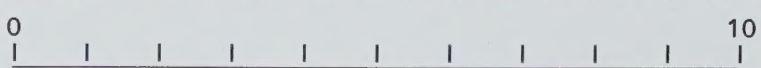
17. To what extent does it provide a proper balance between active and passive activities?



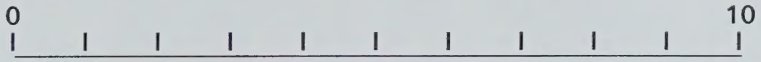
18. To what extent does it encourage the development of leadership?



19. To what extent does it provide for individual differences in levels of skill in various recreation activities?

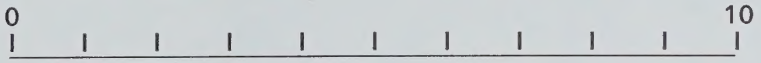


20. To what extent is it flexible enough to accommodate changes in recreation interests?

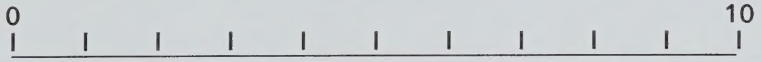


21. To what extent does it provide participants with opportunities to share in the planning and evaluation of the programs?

22. To what extent is there cooperation and cooperative planning among the different agencies and personnel involved in recreation in our community?



23. To what extent does it encourage individuals and groups to accept responsibility for planning their own recreation activities?



24. To what extent does it provide for satisfying group activities?

25. To what extent does it provide for the atypical individual (e.g. handicapped, culturally deprived poor)?